

## Philosophy of Religion

PHI 3700, Ref. # 2502

W 6:30-9:30 J313

**PURPOSE:** This course surveys the philosophy behind the origins and developments of primal, Eastern, and Western religions. Topics include the comparison and contrast of concepts such as Western theism and Eastern pantheism, salvation and enlightenment, faith and mystical experience, and the sky gods and earth goddesses of ancient hunting and planting societies. The crosscultural exploration of human beliefs will also include discussions regarding contemporary religion in America and potential future roles religion might play in our culture.

**READINGS:** Ninian Smart's *Worldviews* and Mary Pat Fisher's *Religion in the Twenty-first Century*.

**REQUIREMENTS:** Attendance and participation (20%), two exams (40%), one paper (35%), and one presentation (5%).

- Aug. 23-Introductions and discussion of course objectives.  
30-Worldviews, Introduction and Chapter One, pp. 1-32.
- Sept. 6-Worldviews, Chapter Two (pp. 33-54).  
13-Religion in 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Foreword and Preface (pp. 5-9),  
and Chapter Two (pp. 29-49).  
20-Religion in 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Chapter Two (pp. 49-72).  
27-Worldviews, Chapters Three and Four (pp. 55-86).
- Oct. 4-Review and discussion. **Paper topic due.**  
11-**Midterm exam**  
18-Worldviews, Chapters Five and Six (pp. 87-103).  
25-Worldviews, Chapters Seven and Eight (pp. 118-144).
- Nov. 1- Religion in 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Chapter One (pp. 10-28).  
8-- Worldviews, Chapter Nine (pp. 145-158); Religion in 21<sup>st</sup> Century,  
Chapter Three (pp. 73-99).  
15- Religion in 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Chapter Four (pp. 100-117).  
22-Thanksgiving, college closed.  
29-Review and presentations.
- Dec. 6-**Exam. Paper due.**

## Philosophy of Religion Midterm

I. Fill in the blank (two points each).

1. \_\_\_\_\_ is a communication with nature that is practiced by primal people and foreign to Western civilization.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ is the Sanskrit term and Hindu concept meaning "following one's own nature."
3. The Taoist concept \_\_\_\_\_ is often compared to the movement of water and refers to "not acting in discord with nature."
4. \_\_\_\_\_ is the Chinese way that cannot be named, yet is the force that unites all polarities.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ means "the coming together" of all world religions.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ is the oldest and most strenuous school of Buddhism.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ is regarded as Islam's "standing miracle."
8. Islam literally means \_\_\_\_\_.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ is regarded as the Father of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
10. To understand and appreciate another religion other than one's own, one must, according to Ninian Smart, practice \_\_\_\_\_.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ is the concept of God that helped establish the historical significance of the Judaism.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ is the Jewish scripture that comprises the first five books of the Bible.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ is the gnostic scripture found in 1945 that contains 114 sayings of Jesus that are free of apocalyptic meanings.
14. \_\_\_\_\_ is the Greek concept of Mother Earth and the focus of an emerging scientific theory.
15. \_\_\_\_\_ is a Latin term for "peasant" or "country dweller" used to describe a person who engages in indigenous rites and practices.

II. Essay (70 points).

1. Compare and contrast basic tenets of Eastern and Western religions. Then discuss the ecumenical dimensions of mystical experience, "ego-less" activity, and enlightenment. Finally, discuss whether or not you think that those ecumenical dimensions can overcome the differences associated with East and West.



III. Major Essay (40 points).

Describe the relationship between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in historical terms, and compare and contrast their most significant doctrines.

1. Describe the evolution of Hinduism into its three major periods. Include major concepts and scripture that exemplify this evolution.

2. Describe the evolution of the yin and yang concepts through the World Parents myths and the I Ching to the Tao Te Ching.

3. Discuss the four schools of Buddhism and their major differences and similarities.

III. Major essay (40 points).

1. Describe the relationship of nature, humans, and the divine as it is expressed through similar concepts and doctrines of Hinduism, Taoism, and Buddhism.